

LA mayor Bass joins Trump in pro-corporate wildfire “relief” charade

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The April 22 Oval Office meeting between Los Angeles Mayor Karen Bass, County Supervisor Kathryn Barger and President Donald Trump has been hailed as a pragmatic effort to secure relief for victims of the January 2025 wildfires. In fact, it is a stark demonstration of the unity of the political establishment in defense of corporate interests.

Bass and Barger appealed for \$34 billion in federal aid, citing the scale of devastation and the insufficiency of existing funds. They urged pressure on major insurers, including State Farm, to pay outstanding claims in areas such as the Pacific Palisades and Altadena. They also called on banks to grant relief to residents paying mortgages on destroyed homes while struggling to afford rent elsewhere.

Trump’s response exposed the fraud at the center of the entire exercise. He announced that Environmental Protection Agency administrator Lee Zeldin would conduct an “audit” of insurance companies, producing a public list distinguishing those that have paid claims from those that have not.

Such an “audit” without enforcement powers imposes no obligation on corporations. It replaces law with publicity, allowing the administration to posture as an opponent of insurance abuses while guaranteeing that no meaningful action is taken.

Supervisor Barger played a central role as a Republican intermediary, presenting the crisis as a nonpartisan humanitarian issue. She emphasized that delays in rebuilding stem not from local permitting regulations but from a lack of liquid capital due to unpaid insurance claims and insufficient federal support.

On the surface, these demands appear reasonable. Millions of residents have indeed been left in dire conditions, and the refusal of insurance corporations to pay claims has compounded the disaster.

The joint appearance of Bass, who has cultivated a

“progressive” image, alongside Barger and Trump, is being celebrated as bipartisan cooperation. In reality, it lays bare the essential class unity of Democrats and Republicans. When confronted with a crisis that threatens social stability, all factions of the ruling elite close ranks.

Karen Bass’s administration in Los Angeles has been defined by austerity, expanded policing and support for real estate developers. Her 2025–26 budget has intensified opposition amid overwork, stagnant wages and declining services, while wildfire response failures followed cuts to fire funding.

Bass’s appearance beside Trump was entirely consistent with her role only days earlier in shutting down the threatened strike by 77,000 Los Angeles educators and school workers. At 2:30 a.m. on April 14, hours before the walkout was set to begin, SEIU Local 99 announced a last-minute deal with LAUSD, abruptly canceling what would have been the first district-wide strike of classified workers, teachers and administrators in LAUSD history.

Bass had intervened directly in the late-night talks, appearing the next morning alongside union officials who praised her for “stepping in” and serving as “the closer,” while they made clear they would “rather be here today than on the picket line.” In that case, as in the wildfire talks, Bass functioned as an enforcer for the corporate and Democratic Party establishment, blocking a broader mobilization of workers and subordinating urgent social needs to the dictates of the ruling class.

She has boosted LAPD spending, aligned with federal raids and advanced punitive homelessness policies benefiting private contractors. Facing reelection and a \$1 billion shortfall, Bass declared a fiscal emergency, proposing the elimination of 1,647 city jobs to impose sweeping social cuts.

The supposed pressure on insurers is a preemptive maneuver to contain mounting public anger. Insurance corporations are not aberrantly failing. They are

functioning exactly as the system requires, maximizing profit by denying or delaying payouts. The refusal to impose binding regulation reflects the political intent by both big business parties.

Trump's administration has systematically dismantled regulatory structures, including through the "10-for-1" executive order mandating the elimination of ten regulations for every new one introduced. Oversight has been gutted across industries. The same government now pretends that a public "audit" will discipline corporations it has deliberately freed from constraint.

The assignment given to Zeldin underscores this reality. There are no fines, mandates or structural changes under consideration. The administration relies entirely on voluntary compliance, that is, on the goodwill of corporations whose profits depend on doing the opposite.

Equally damning is the role of Bass and the Democratic Party. Bass has not opposed this agenda but integrated herself into it, presenting collaboration with the Trump administration as a necessity. The claim that "wildfires have no political affiliation" is a conscious falsification. It denies the class character of both the disaster and the response.

This mirrors the actions of figures such as New York City Mayor Zohran Mamdani, who has openly forged a partnership with Trump despite employing left-wing rhetoric during his electoral campaign for mayor.

Bass's participation in this meeting further exposes the hollowness of her "progressive" credentials. Her alignment with Trump not only provides political cover for a pro-corporate agenda, it is being consciously deployed as part of her mayoral re-election campaign, in which "bipartisanship" serves as a marketing tool for policies that defend corporate interests. The claim that "wildfires have no political affiliation" serves to obscure the class interests at stake.

Wildfires, like all disasters, are shaped by social conditions. Their scale and impact reflect decades of deregulation, environmental destruction and the subordination of infrastructure to private profit. By reducing the crisis to a logistical problem, officials conceal its origins in policy and class relations.

The situation in California makes this explicit. Insurance Commissioner Ricardo Lara, a Democrat, has functioned as a key facilitator of insurance industry interests, approving major premium hikes while advancing a "sustainable insurance strategy" that legitimized deregulation. He accepted industry donations, intervened to benefit contributing firms and helped create

conditions allowing insurers to raise rates, withdraw coverage and shift costs onto homeowners, effectively transforming the regulatory apparatus into a mechanism for protecting corporate profits rather than consumers.

The role of California Governor Gavin Newsom cannot be ignored either. He has suspended key environmental protections, including the California Environmental Quality Act, to fast-track rebuilding for utility companies. Under the guise of recovery, his policies grant firms like Southern California Edison broad freedom to operate without oversight, prioritizing profit over environmental and public safety concerns while mirroring federal deregulatory practices and reinforcing the subordination of state policy to corporate demands

State Farm has no doubt played a central role in deepening the wildfire crisis by delaying and disputing claims, while simultaneously seeking major premium increases and reducing coverage in high-risk areas. Homeowners have faced prolonged waits for payouts and, in many cases, loss of coverage altogether, reflecting a profit-driven strategy that shifts the financial burden of disasters onto policyholders rather than absorbing losses.

However, the focus on individual firms such as State Farm can be used as a diversion. The problem is not a handful of bad actors but the structure of the entire industry. Insurance companies operate according to profit calculations, not social need. Without coercive regulation, they will continue to deny claims and raise rates.

The same applies to the appeals directed at banks. Calls for voluntary relief are empty gestures. Financial institutions will not act against their own interests absent compulsion. The refusal to impose such compulsion defines the policy of both parties.

The April 22 meeting exposes the real character of American politics: whatever differences exist between Democrats and Republicans, they collapse when corporate interests are at stake. In times of crisis, the political system operates as a unified mechanism for defending capitalist rule. The alignment of Bass, Barger and Trump exposes how the ruling class manages social catastrophe: empty rhetoric with policies that leave the underlying system untouched.



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